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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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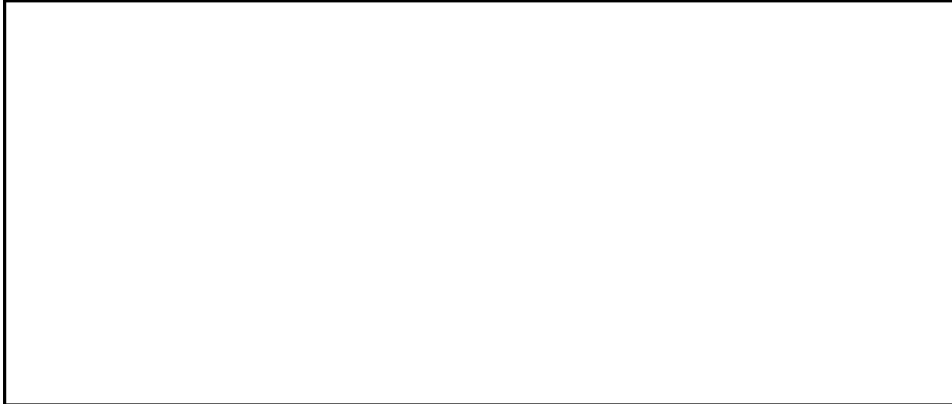
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The military establishment remains heavily preoccupied with the question of its candidate for president.

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[REDACTED] the military backers of neither Ky nor Thieu are certain of their strength, although most [REDACTED] presently grant Ky an edge. In addition, some officers may prefer that the military as such avoid formally sponsoring a candidate. [REDACTED] Ky is trying to develop sufficiently broad civilian backing for his candidacy to present Thieu and the generals with a virtual fait accompli.

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Meanwhile, another civilian, Constituent Assembly member Nguyen Dinh Quat, has reportedly entered the presidential race. Quat, one of two unsuccessful opponents of former President Diem in the 1961 election, is unlikely to present a serious challenge in view of his lack of organized support and his somewhat unsavory business reputation.

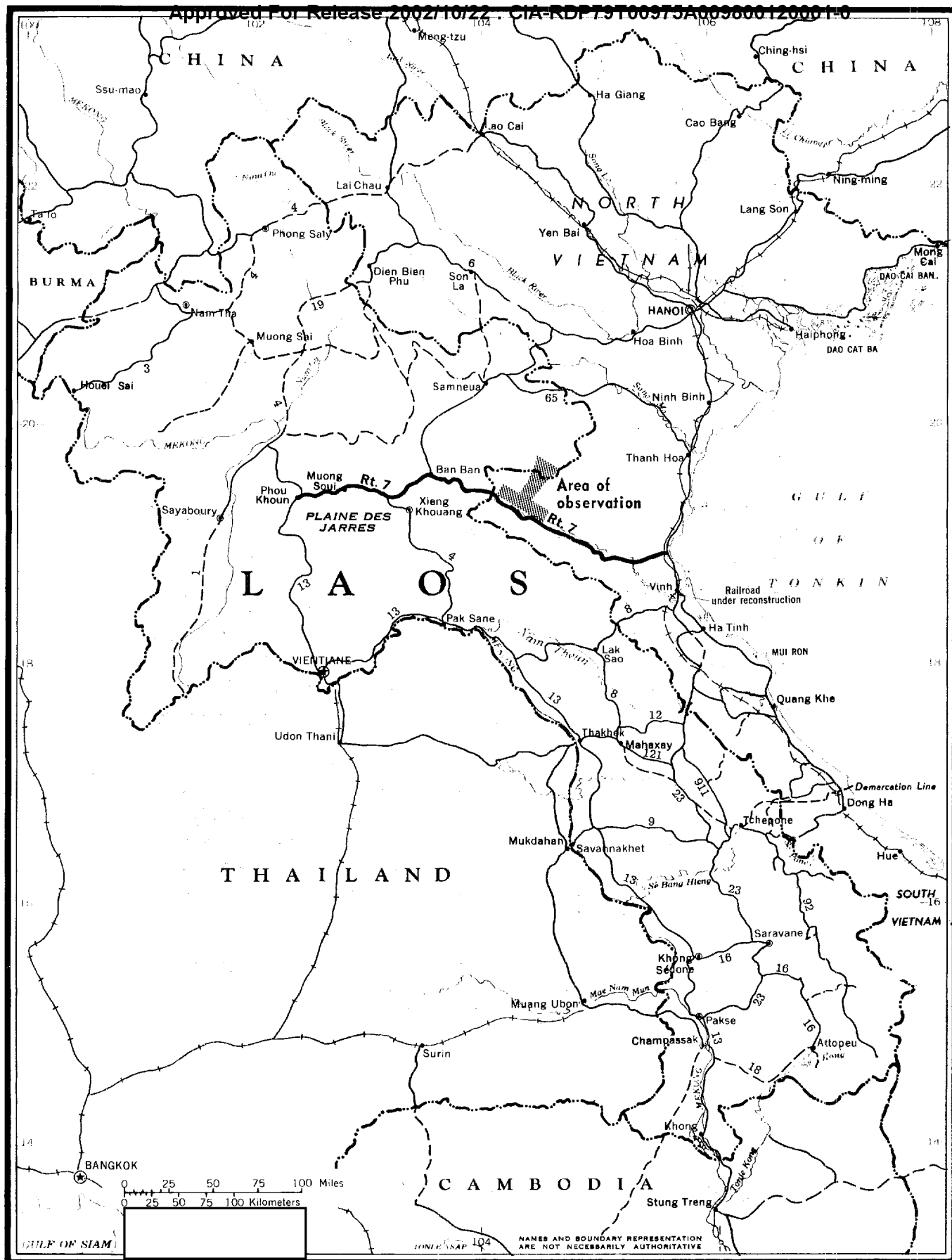
The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Nothing of significance has been reported during the past 24 hours. [REDACTED]

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Laos: A sudden and large increase in truck traffic in North Vietnam has been reported heading in the direction of the Plaine des Jarres, in northern Laos.

Trained ground observers claim that from 27 March through 4 April more than 820 trucks, or a daily average of 90, moved west on Route 7 at a point just inside North Vietnam. The daily average of westbound traffic on this route from the first of the year through 26 March reportedly was about 30.

There are truck parks and storage areas on Route 7 short of the Laos border where some of the observed trucks could stop. It is likely, however, that the great majority were destined to cross into Laos and continue toward the Plaine des Jarres. A small number of the trucks were reported carrying troops, but the remainder were apparently delivering supplies.

There is no supplementary evidence to indicate the purpose of this increase in traffic. The dry season in northern Laos is due to end in six or seven weeks, and the Communists may be stockpiling for the rainy season. Existing Communist supply dumps may be running low--possibly because of losses resulting from air attacks. The possibility of a buildup for some Communist operations before the rainy season cannot be ruled out, but there is no other indication that this is under way.

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India: Congress Party leaders have been thrown off balance by a sudden agreement among the major opposition parties on candidates for the presidency and vice presidency.

These two posts will be filled for five-year terms on 6 May by the vote of an electoral college made up of the elected members of both houses of parliament and the 17 state assemblies. Congress appears to hold a slight majority in this electorate. Communal and regional factors, however, militate against a vote strictly along party lines. Moreover, Congress has suffered defections recently in some state legislatures and the opposition probably hopes to recruit enough dissatisfied Congress Party legislators to eke out a victory.

The seven major opposition parties until now have been unable to find any common ground for agreement on national issues. However, in reaching a quick decision on their candidates--the chief justice of the Supreme Court and a prominent Muslim educator, neither of whom is prominent politically--they displayed impressive unity. In contrast, Congress leaders reportedly are still divided over their choice of candidates.

Although the duties of the president and vice president have been largely ceremonial, loss of the two posts would be a serious blow to Congress prestige and could threaten the stability of the central government. Moreover, in some future cabinet crisis the president and vice president could wield significant power.

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NOTES

Nigeria: Commander in Chief Gowon's principal response thus far to Eastern Governor Ojukwu's edict of 31 March taking control of revenues collected in the East has been to suspend Nigeria Airways' flights into the region. As of 3 April, two of the three other regional governors had refused to support stronger retaliation. The Ghanaians are still trying to mediate between Gowon and Ojukwu, who wants to involve other African heads of state in the mediation efforts.

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Bolivia: Bolivian military forces have not encountered significant guerrilla activity since a government patrol was ambushed on 23 March. The government has launched a long-term strategy of building up a counterinsurgency force capable of containing and then eliminating the guerrillas. Bolivian press reports have been exaggerated and misleading, largely as a result of government attempts to suppress information indicating that officials have mishandled the situation from the beginning.

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